

ROCHESTER HISTORY

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VOL. III

JULY, 1941

No. 3

ROCHESTER FIFTY YEARS AGO

By DEXTER PERKINS

Two years ago I contributed to this little magazine an article on the Rochester of 100 years ago. The Rochester of that far-away epoch, I pointed out, was a Rochester just beginning to grow into a developed municipality, a Rochester set in the heart of a rich agricultural region which might still with reason describe itself as the West, a Rochester whose industries, principally milling, were still close to the soil, a Rochester stirred by the generous enthusiasms of a time when general education was in its infancy, and when numerous measures of reform, prohibition, anti-slavery, woman suffrage, and many others were either just appearing on the horizon, or were in the first stages of their development. This Rochester of 1839 had little indeed in common with the Rochester of our own day.

The Rochester of fifty years ago was in a somewhat different case. There could be no doubt that it was, by this time, much more than a rambling country town; the great wheat fields of the Genesee had yielded there ascendancy to the far-reaching prairies of the new West; industrially a new epoch was dawning, which had little to do with the extractive industries that had been the first source of Rochester's industrial activity; and the cries and shibboleths of 1890 were very different from those of a half century before. The new industrial America was on its way, an America which stood half way in its institutional and cultural development, as it stood half way in time, between the frontier community of 1839 and the city of our own day.

ROCHESTER HISTORY, published quarterly by the Rochester Public Library, distributed free at the Library, by mail 25 cents per year. Address correspondence to the City Historian, Rochester Public Library, 115 South Avenue, Rochester, N. Y.

In population Rochester had indeed developed since 1839. At that time it had had only a little more than 20,000 inhabitants. In 1890 the figure was more than six fold greater, 134,000. It was possible, of course, for patriotic Rochesterians to be disappointed at this showing. The Flower City had, alas! been passed by Buffalo. It was clearly not to be a great metropolis in the full sense of the term. But it had increased by 54 per cent, so its boosters might say, in a single decade, and it was still growing. In area, too, it had expanded, to about two and one half times the size of the little city of fifty years before. It now reached to Culver Road, on the east, to Elmwood Avenue on the south, to just short of the present Kodak Park area on the north, nearly to Mt. Read Boulevard on the west. Great growth was ahead, it is true. Today the city is more than twice as large as it was then. But the expansion had been considerable in the period of fifty years.

And if Rochester was larger, it was also very different. In 1840 its people were almost all of the old American stock, save for the Irish who arrived in the years following the construction of the canal. Early Rochester had its prejudices as to "foreigners." But in 1890 it was no longer a sort of colony of New England, with some infusion of Marylanders and other Southerners. In 1890, of its 134,000 people only about 40,000 were natives born of native parents; the rest were immigrants (another 40,000 nearly), or the sons and daughters of immigrants (over 54,000). What had happened in most of the cities of the country had happened here. The life of America had been enriched by the coming of new stocks to play their part in the diversity and in the larger unity of American life. A new kind of city was coming into being.

Of these new stocks by far the most important one, both in numbers and in influence, was the German. In many ways these immigrants were to leave their mark on Rochester. To its industrial development they contributed new skills, initiative, and a capacity for taking infinite pains—the results of which can be seen today in some of the city's highly specialized industries. They were active in establishing religious institutions, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. In 1890 fifteen of the city's churches and synagogues were definitely designated as

German while many others had largely German congregations. Two of the six daily papers were in the German language. German clubs were active in the musical and athletic spheres. The newcomers took an active interest in civic affairs, and were coming more and more to hold public office of one kind or another. All in all, they brought to the city of their adoption not only new blood, but also new talents, new interests and new customs.

In its physical appearance, as in its population, Rochester had made real strides in the half century since 1840. As to buildings, the Reynolds Arcade had been the proudest boast of the Flower City in its early years. But the invention of the elevator and the use of structural steel was bringing in a new age of building, and in 1891 the city could boast that it had two buildings of eleven stories, a dizzy height indeed. The tallest building in the city was the Powers Block, which was the pride, not only of its owner, D. W. Powers, but of every loyal Rochesterian. Through its marble halls, carpeted reception rooms, and famous art galleries visitors to the city were led on tours of inspection, and, truth to tell, many of them seem to have been duly impressed. As a sight-seer's point of interest the Powers Building seems to have completely displaced the falls. When its position as the "city's tallest" was temporarily challenged by the Wilder Building, Mr. Powers, not to be outdone, added a tower to his own. From this tower the weather flag still flies.

But the Powers Building and the Wilder Building were by no means the only signs of a new age of construction. There was the "new" Government and Post Office Building nearby, begun in 1885 and finished in 1889, and considered a masterpiece of architecture. There was the Ellwanger and Barry Building on State Street, its interior resplendent with blue and yellow tile floors, imitation brick walls, and potted rubber plants and ferns. There was the building now known as the City Hall Annex, then housing the Kimball Tobacco Company, surmounted by that familiar genius of Rochester's sky-line, Guernsey Mitchell's statue of Mercury, put in place as early as 1881. The end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties saw a remarkable alteration in the appearance of downtown Rochester, from the standpoint of just such construction as this.

Yet despite these landmarks downtown Rochester can hardly be said to have looked as it does today. Main Street Bridge, it is true, must have been much as it was until the recent fire. (Despite its charm, and its almost unique character, Rochesterians rarely seemed to realize how out of the ordinary it was, and concentrated their attention on the unimpressive rise that was described as Main Street Hill.) But beside the bridge, the scene was very different then than now. Guernsey Mitchell's Mercury, for example, looked down not upon Broad Street with its steady stream of automobiles, but upon the placid canal, carried across the rushing river on its old grey stone aqueduct. Along the towpath still plodded patient horses hauling boatloads of produce—for despite the nine railroads which entered the city the canal was still in use. Here and there lift bridges still spanned the historic waterway, sometimes exasperating by the slowness with which they descended into place after the canal boat had passed. Even in what we now call downtown there were many private residences. The streets were often in very poor condition, torn up for the installation of new mains and wires or bumpy from repavement; tall poles carrying a multitude of wires still lined many of the thoroughfares; horse-cars, with colored lights as signs of destination, still served as the main form of transportation, with here and there the bicycle and the tandem. Horse-drawn trucks and drays, lumbering farm-wagons, graceful and aristocratic buggies played their part in the stream of traffic, a traffic relatively unregulated as compared with that of today.

Outside the center of town was going on that remarkable growth that has made residential Rochester one of the most attractive cities in the nation. East Avenue was not yet in its hey-day; but it was by 1890 most certainly the street of which the citizens were proudest, vying with Euclid Avenue in Cleveland in the eyes of Rochesterians. The nurseries which had made the city famous and formed one of its principal industries in the sixties and seventies had by 1890 cut up much of their land into house-lots, and in so doing formed some of the attractive areas of new housing: the section between Mt. Hope and South Avenue which was once a part of the great Ellwanger and Barry nursery, the Oxford Street section, on the site of the Hooker nursery, the Vick Park area, still bearing the name of the nursery of which it was a part. On the periphery of these and other residential areas were

the beginnings of Rochester's park system. It had taken the city fathers five years to decide to accept the offer made by George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry of nineteen acres, the nucleus of the present Highland Park, but in 1888 they not only accepted the gift, but formed a park board to purchase more land for park purposes. Under the enlightened and vigorous leadership of Dr. Edward Mott Moore, the father of Rochester's park system, land was purchased for three other parks, Seneca, Maplewood and Genesee Valley. Despite the opposition of unimaginative souls who declared that a park system was an unnecessary extravagance, and that any one could get into the country for a few cents, and that the parks would either be misused or not used at all, the solid beginnings of one of Rochester's greatest assets had been firmly laid by 1890. After a period of something like lethargy, an era of civic improvement was setting in.

Politics and Government

The Rochester of 1890 was in the main a Republican community. From 1876 to 1890 the Grand Old Party carried the mayoralty in seven successive elections, with the debonair Cornelius Parsons, famed for the rose-bud which adorned his buttonhole, as candidate for mayor. Parsons' personal popularity was very great indeed; not only was he elected seven times, but in 1884, 1886 and 1888 his vote was nearly double that of his Democratic opponent. But in the year 1890 matters went a bit differently. The Democrats nominated a strong candidate in William Carroll; he polled a tremendous vote; the story is that he went about asking his friends to vote for him as a personal favor and compliment, and thus seduced many from the party fold; the state of the city government, and a low city treasury, may also have had something to do with the result. At any rate, the Democrats won by 300 votes, and twice more in the decade of the nineties they were to repeat their triumph under the leadership of George E. Warner.

There was being built, however, in 1890, despite Mayor Carroll's victory, one of the most remarkable personal and party organizations in the history of any municipality in the United States. No account of Rochester in 1890 would be complete without more than passing reference to the rise to power of George W. Aldridge, who retained

his extraordinary control of the local situation until his death in 1922. Mr. Aldridge had come to Rochester at an early age, and received his education in the common schools, going to school for a little time at least with George Eastman. His family was cultured and well-to-do; his father was a well-known contractor and builder, prominent in Masonry and a member of several clubs. The elder Aldridge was active in politics, serving three terms as President of the Board of Aldermen, and a short time as mayor in 1873. Young George joined his father in the contracting business sometime around 1873, and carried on the business himself after his father's death in 1877. Never a particularly effective public speaker, Aldridge none the less possessed the qualities of a great political organizer, generosity, loyalty, energy and a particularly shrewd judgment of men. He entered politics for the first time in 1880 as a candidate for the Executive Board, and was defeated by "Jake" Gerling, long a familiar figure in Rochester Democratic politics, by the narrow margin of 515 votes. But in 1883 he staged a come-back; elected to the Board in that year by a narrow majority, he was re-elected by increasing margins in 1886, in 1889, and in 1892. In 1890 he became a member of the Republican state committee; and the ascendancy in the local councils of his party which he had by now won was only to be strengthened with the years. To look ahead for a little, it is interesting to observe that between 1892 and 1922 there was not a Democratic congressman elected from the Rochester district in any regular election; there was not a single Democratic state senator; there were only eight Democratic victories out of 112 contests for the Assembly; there were only three occasions on which the Democrats carried the Common Council; there was only one occasion when they carried the Board of Supervisors. Certainly this is an astounding record.

Political organization is not a matter of abstractions. It rests, almost inevitably, partly upon loyalty to ideas, or faiths, but also, and very largely, upon favors given and received, upon jobs judiciously dispensed, upon a whole net-work of personal relationships. In 1883, when Mr. Aldridge was elected to the Executive Board, that body controlled about nine-tenths of the city patronage. It consisted of three members, but soon the aspiring leader came to dominate it. Patiently and tenaciously, and with great ability, he used his power to build up

an increasingly strong machine. He wooed and won many Democrats to his standard; he was often able to control the Council, though this body had a nominal Democratic majority. If, by 1890, he had not as yet thoroughly consolidated his power, he was none the less well on the way to that secure ascendancy which was to be his.

In due course Mr. Aldridge was to make the government of the city of Rochester widely and favorably known; but that government in 1890 was certainly very far from perfect, very far, indeed, from the standards of today. Apparently a financial scandal had something to do with the Democratic victory of William Carroll; and the city treasurer of the period was directly involved. There was also anything but a savory situation in the city's department of health; it is significant that the Monroe County Medical Society refused to allow its members to have any connection with the city's health service. Despite the fine start on the park system, other services of fundamental significance were either in poor shape or non-existent; the great reorganization of the city school system was to wait for another decade; the establishment of a public library still longer. Sewage outlets still ran for six miles through the city in open ditches; only a small fraction of the streets were paved, and those, as we have said, none too well; grade crossings for the railroads were still numerous, though not on the main lines of traffic.

Yet there were signs of change and progress. Conservatives called attention to the mounting cost of city government; instead of the few thousands or tens of thousands of the village period, annual expenditure had mounted to \$1,127,000 in 1880 and nearly \$3,000,000 in 1890. But these great increases of the eighties were reflected in enlarged municipal services; in 1881 for example there had been only 41 firemen, in 1891 there were 112. In 1886 there had been only 90 men on the police force; in 1892 there were nearly double that number. Bad as the streets still were in many instances, from 1885 to 1892 more money was expended on paving than in the whole preceding thirty-five years. A large outlet sewer was under construction, to be completed in 1894 at the cost of a million dollars; electric lights, strange new inventions were replacing the early gas and oil illumination; the last oil bill was paid in 1887; the gas jets had diminished

in number to less than a third of the whole number of lights. All these things meant money; and while they may have been brought about in some instances wastefully, and perhaps worse, they were none the less signs of an important series of steps forward. They marked a real advance towards the Rochester of the twentieth century.

Such were some of the aspects of the local governmental scene; but a word should be said of Rochester in relation to larger political affairs. The political contests of fifty years ago were exciting affairs; it is certain that those of today, despite the larger number of voters involved, are comparatively tame—and comparatively polite. For in 1890 the two political parties were pretty evenly balanced in the country at large. In 1884 Grover Cleveland had carried New York, and with New York the Presidency, by the slender margin of 1200 votes. In 1888 he had lost it by only about 15,000 and again the result was decisive. In 1892 he won by about 40,000 in a vote of over one and a quarter million, and for the third time the electoral vote of New York was a necessary part of the victor's majority. The state was almost as evenly balanced in elections to the governorship. The Democrats won in 1888 and in 1891; but they did so by no great margins, and the able but cynical David B. Hill was defeated for a third term in 1892. With so close a party struggle, it was inevitable that elections should be hotly contested; perhaps the best indication of the intensity of the struggle was to be found in the marching clubs which were at this time a striking feature of every political campaign. The leading citizens of the municipality took part in these extraordinary demonstrations of party loyalty; the famous Boys in Blue had many of the characteristics of a social club, and numbered such men as Charles F. Pond, of the *Democrat and Chronicle*, James Breck Perkins, author and congressman-to-be, Granger Hollister, Porter Farley, Henry Brewster, and many others. The Democrats, in point of social distinction, could hardly do as well, but the Flambeau Corps, while it lasted, attempted to outshine its rival with its magnificent gold uniforms, and its enthusiasm for the cause of the donkey. The torchlight processions of these organizations were a regular feature of every important political campaign; and there is a reminiscent thrill in the thought of them even today. Not that carrying a tin can on the end of a stick strikes one as a particularly rational form of political exercise; but it would

be a poor—or any rate a very different—world if reason were everything; and no doubt, in all campaigns the arousing of political enthusiasm has a very practical relationship to the results achieved.

One word more must be said, before leaving the subject of politics, as to the period of the nineties. Distant, indeed, those days seem in terms of issues and problems of 1941. The distinction between the two parties was very far from a wide one, turning principally on the tariff. The role of government was still a very simple one; the first administrative agency, the Interstate Commerce Commission, had only been set up in 1887; so far as the federal government was concerned, most of its revenue came from custom duties, and income taxes were unknown; it was a matter for deep concern when the Congress of 1890 appropriated for the first time in the nation's history the sum of one billion dollars for the expenses of government. In the main, Democrats and Republicans alike expected little from Washington; and the widely prevailing philosophy was that American business could not only be trusted to take care of itself, but of the welfare of the American people in the process. Despite hard times to come, the country was prosperous in 1890; and in Rochester, as elsewhere, there were signs of an industrial growth that seemed to carry every promise for the future. The golden age of American business activity, free business activity, was not far ahead.

Economic Life

Few cities have been more fortunate in their economic development than Rochester. Its history, like that of most American cities, is a history of change; but unlike many, change in Rochester has never meant upheaval or collapse, but merely a stage in the process of progress. Rochester's evolution, moreover, has been illustrative of the large tendencies at work in the nation as a whole.

In its early days, of course, our city was primarily a milling city. The heart of a prosperous wheat-growing district, it was one of the great flour centers of the country. But the westward movement, the occupation of the great plains, naturally deprived Rochester of its favored position. The industry was in decline even before the Civil War, and the decline had gone further by the year 1890. About a

dozen good-sized mills still lined the banks of the Genesee at this later date, and together with a number of smaller establishments turned out a considerable quantity of flour, the quality of which was still famous. But most of this flour was now produced for local consumption. Only a few of Rochester's citizens, having regard to its size, depended upon milling for a living. The time-honored mill-stone method had been replaced by the new rolling process which gave an advantage to the more modern mills of the West. The plains of Kansas, of Nebraska, of the Dakotas, had replaced the valley of the Genesee in the production of wheat.

In the days of the wheat industry, another industry close to the soil had sprung up in Rochester, the nursery business. Coming a little later in time than milling, the nurseries of Rochester were still enjoying a vigorous life in 1890, though perhaps past their hey-day. The stock of the great firms which centered here had been sent not only to our expanding West, but to lands as far away as Korea or Australia. The name of Ellwanger and Barry was known wherever an interest in horticulture existed, and at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 and the Paris Exhibition of 1900 its exhibits received awards of honor. Patrick Barry, it is true, died in 1890, after a long life devoted to the furtherance of the science of horticulture and to the duties of citizenship—but George Ellwanger lived on into the next century, a genial and beloved patriarch. Though the splitting up of the great nursery tracts into house-lots showed which way the tide was running, Rochester was still proud of its nursery business, and owes to it something of the splendor of its great park system of today.

There was another industry that had its roots in the period before the Civil War, and was destined to play a large part in the life of the city. John Jacob Bausch and Henry Lomb made their start in the Reynolds Arcade Building in 1853 with a capital of about sixty dollars. They had not only courage, but ingenuity. By discovering and utilizing hard rubber as suitable material for spectacle frames, by building and equipping machinery for the grinding of optical lenses, they laid the foundations of an industry which grew during the Civil War, and had attained a place of importance in Rochester's industrial life by the year 1890.

The war itself had stimulated another activity which was destined to play an increasing role in the history of the city. The needs of the army had stimulated a great clothing boom. Rochester had participated in this boom. By 1891 there were 64 shoe factories, and for the next three decades in the field of women's and children's quality shoes the city held a position of leadership. In the clothing industry Rochester stood fifth in the country as a whole, with 30 factories employing 5,000 men and women. Here again an important future was foreshadowed.

The list of Rochester's growing activity in 1890 might easily be lengthened. Indeed, there was already developing that diversity of interest which has been a source of strength to the city. The Ritter Dental Company and Yawman and Erbe for example both go back to more than fifty years ago. So, too, does the Gleason Works. But the most important of all Rochester's present day activities was still in a rudimentary stage. Eastman Kodak had hardly more than begun the career which has made it not only one of the greatest, but one of the most intelligently and humanely run businesses in all the United States.

George Eastman had been an employee in a Rochester bank when he first became interested in photography. In a few years after first taking up the hobby he had received patents upon several important improvements. In 1881 he and Colonel Henry A. Strong had begun the manufacture of photographic supplies and Eastman soon resigned from his bank position to devote all his time to the conduct of the business and to research in the problems of photography. From the very outset of his career he proved himself not only a good business man, but a business man keenly alive to the importance of science in modern industry. By 1887 had come the invention of the Kodak. No longer need the amateur photographer set forth heavily burdened with paraphernalia; here was a small and convenient instrument for taking pictures that could be carried in the hand. At first, it is true, the whole camera had to be sent into the factory when the films were to be developed, but this was soon remedied. The name Kodak—Mr. Eastman's own invention—soon took hold, and became widely known; it was the subject of cartoons and jokes and even of a song in one of the popular Gilbert and Sullivan operas of the day. In 1889 the East-

man Company was incorporated with a capital stock of \$1,000,000; the first buildings were erected at Kodak Park in the course of the next year. Already one writer was commenting upon "the gigantic proportions" the business had assumed; but these proportions seem less gigantic when it is discovered that in 1890 the Kodak firm employed three hundred persons.

Certainly, however, the future was promising. Rochesterians, like most Americans, looked forward to a great expansion in the future. In 1890 in an age of business par excellence, of business untroubled by governmental interference and by heavy taxation, it was natural that one expression of the prevailing spirit should be the organization of Chambers of Commerce. Rochester's was founded in 1887, and breathed confidence in every utterance. Rochester, it was believed, could, by availing itself of its natural advantages, soon outdistance its rivals in and out of the state. It was suggested that in the race for industrial supremacy the city should adopt the song so popular in England in 1878 when that country seemed likely to become involved in war, "We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do, We're got the men, we've got the ships, we've got the money, too." The Chamber apparently felt that it had two missions. One was to spread abroad the fame of Rochester and invite outsiders to share in its opportunities. The other was closer at home—to impress "those croakers who do not realize that we have out-grown the village."*

Certainly the village had, in fact, been out-grown. By the year 1890 nine railroads entered Rochester. The imports and exports through the lake port of Charlotte were both close to a million dollars. More than 400,000 tons of merchandise were loaded and unloaded from the canal, which was not only important in itself, but which also favorably influenced the rates on the railroads. And, sure sign of a larger future, capital was coming into the city from outside. In 1889 a group of New York capitalists paid \$600,000 in cash for the Rochester Gas Company; British investors acquired an interest in the city's three largest breweries; other British interests were trying to buy the leading flour mills.

*Chamber of Commerce, *Report*, 1889. p. 5.

But there was, of course, another side to the picture. In Rochester, as elsewhere, working conditions were often so bad as to seem appalling to the modern observer. Some of the larger firms built light, airy factories, put in lunch-rooms and emergency hospitals, and tried to build up a constructive and helpful employer-employee relationship. But there was a grim contrast to all this. Men, women, yes, and children, sometimes worked in dirty, ill-lighted, poorly ventilated fire-traps. Hours were very long; pay often pitifully small. Emma Goldman recounted that she worked ten hours a day in a local clothing factory for \$2.50 a week. Even lower standards existed in payment for work "sent out" to be done by women and children. The street car strike of 1889 was in large measure a protest against long hours, and exposure to the elements on open platforms in all kinds of weather. The growth of a labor union movement, still young, was in part a reaction to long hours and low wages.

Certainly, in 1890, in Rochester, as elsewhere, the modern development of the labor union movement was far in the future. A start had been made in the Typographical Union and the Iron Moulders as early as the 1850's; the development of craft unions was making some headway in the 80's and 90's. But in general public sentiment was by no means sympathetic with unionism; and the attitude of both of the great political parties, and of their leaders, reflected this fact. Nor were there many signs that labor itself was politically self-conscious; or that there was any substantial support for leftwing movements such as then existed on a limited scale. Some important figures in the history of American radicalism had a connection with Rochester; one needs only to think of Emma Goldman and of Daniel De Leon. But these figures were certainly not very influential in their own community; indeed, they in no wise reflected its prevailing spirit. Rochester in 1890 was animated by the spirit of laissez-faire which was that of America as a whole. The country had grown up through an era of unregulated competition; in both business and labor the signs of combination had, of course, begun to appear, had, in some few instances gone far; but in the main Americans still believed that that government was best that governed least, and that the ordinary laws of the market would produce the best of possible worlds. We have travelled far from that position today.

Religion and Education

Having discussed the political and economic life of Rochester, let us now turn to the life of the spirit and of the mind. In the field of religion many changes had taken place since the Civil War. In 1839, for example, revivalism had been a characteristic feature of Protestant Christianity. It had been the concern of all groups and classes in the community. But by 1890 the scene had entirely changed. By the end of the century the relatively feeble attempts to hold revivals here were ignored not only by the more solid citizens, but by the majority of the churches. Two denominations, moreover, which had long been established in the community disappeared from the religious scene during this period. These were the Scotch Covenanters and the Quakers. The latter had been one of the earliest bodies to be established in the little village of Rochester and for some years had maintained two meetings, an Orthodox and a Hicksite. During the pre-Civil War period Rochester's leading citizens had in some striking instances belonged to this group, and it had taken a prominent part in the anti-slavery activity and in other reform movements. But it no longer existed independently by 1890, its functions having been in some measure taken over by the Unitarian Church.

Mention of the Unitarians points to the change which was under way in the field of Protestant dogma. In the main, the clergy of Rochester were conservatives, what we should today describe as "fundamentalist" in their point of view. But there was the ferment of a new, and to many of the older persuasion, a disruptive movement. As early as 1880, in a friendly controversy, Dr. Augustus Strong of the Theological Seminary, took issue with Dr. Newton M. Mann of the Unitarian Church on the question of eternal damnation. Dr. Strong stoutly maintained that this idea was not inconsistent with the conception of a just and kindly God: Dr. Mann, claiming that "the fires of hell" was merely a figure of speech, declared that "the lofty poetry of the Hebrews had been made the source of a monstrous superstition."* The difference between these two men was what it should

*Orlo J. Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism in Rochester" Rochester Historical Society *Publications* XII: 323.

have been; but it was another matter when Dr. Myron Adams, of Plymouth Presbyterian, stated a point of view not essentially different from that of the Unitarian. At St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, too, Dr. Algernon Crapsey, who had assumed his charge in 1879, was advancing towards a view-point which was, more than a decade after, to involve him in one of the greatest heresy trials in the history of American Protestantism.

Of interest, too, in this period, was the development of the adult Sunday School class. Mr. William A. Hubbard, Jr. had begun his fifty-seven year task of teaching a men's class at Central Church as far back as 1869. William A. Montgomery began forty-four years of service at the Lake Avenue Baptist Church in 1880; John F. Dinkey was to render forty-four years of service at the Lutheran Reformation Church. But these are only some of the important names; and out of the men's Sunday School classes, led by such men as Joseph T. Alling and Clarence A. Barbour, was to spring a movement of civic reform towards the end of the decade that long left its mark upon the history of Rochester.

There was also a new movement, nation-wide in scope, which was big with hope for the future. The Young Men's Christian Association had entered Rochester in 1875. By 1890 it had prospered to such an extent that it was able to build itself a new home at the corner of South Avenue and Court Street, equipped with club and recreation rooms as well as with rooms for residents. In 1883 the Young Women's Christian Association was organized, and it, too, grew apace. Movements such as these gave new strength and vigor to the churches and to Protestant Christianity.

A new emphasis was provided, also, by the Salvation Army, with its preoccupation with assistance to the bitterly unfortunate, when a branch was opened in Rochester in 1884. Five years later the People's Rescue Mission was established. In 1892, Dr. Crapsey, in a challenging sermon, set forth the idea of the "institutional" church. In all these things there were signs of a new attitude, of a preoccupation with human misery and social injustice that was much less marked fifty years before, save for the strong movements against slavery and intemperance.

While the Protestant Churches were thus evolving, Catholicism had made great strides in Rochester. It had, of course, been relatively unimportant in the earlier life of the city. But in common with other growing cities, Rochester had attracted large numbers of Catholic immigrants, and by 1890 the Catholics had more parishes than any other religious group in the city. They were ably led by Bishop McQuaid, one of the great Catholic churchmen of the epoch, a stout and courageous apostle of his faith. In the last two decades of the century, they built seven new churches in Rochester, a number exceeded only by the Lutherans. No church, it is probable, ministered to a deeper religious need; none was closer to its communicants.

Interesting developments were also taking place among the Jewish congregations in the closing decades of the century. At B'rith Kodesh the seat of the most liberal group, an organ and choir had been introduced as early as the sixties, family pews in the seventies; by 1879 the custom of removing hats before entering the Temple had been established; in 1884 the momentous decision to conduct services in English was made. B'rith Kodesh was the first congregation in the United States, perhaps the first in the world, to take this step.

Vigorous, indeed, then were the manifestations of the religious spirit in the Rochester of 1890. In the field of education, however, Rochester still had a long way to go in this closing decade of the nineteenth century. The machinery of administration was antiquated in the extreme; the school board, long after enlightened citizens and educational authorities had realized the advantages of a simpler system, was still elected on a ward basis. The sums appropriated for normal expenses were again and again proven to be inadequate; the crowding of the pupils became a very serious problem. Boys and girls recited their lessons in improvised annexes, in hallways and even in attics. Instances were given of a hundred children crowded into a room meant to hold forty-five. Ventilating conditions were often extremely bad; there were constant complaints of the epidemics of colds and other illnesses attributed to the schools. As for the teachers, they were paid sums which seem simply ridiculous today. The average salary in 1880 had been \$495 a year; in 1890 it had risen to the majestic height of \$565. Principals, at any rate women principals, were getting

between \$550 and \$750 a year. Two particularly fortunate souls received the princely salaries of \$1,000 and \$1,250. The total school budget was under \$400,000, not a twentieth part of what it is at the present time.

But the picture fifty years ago was not in every respect a dark one, of course. Rochester had at this time a superintendent of schools who deserves to rank well in the list of distinguished men who have held this office. Sylvanus A. Ellis had been superintendent from 1869 to 1876; he returned to and occupied this office from 1882 to 1892. Ellis's first term had been notable for the opening of the Rochester Free Academy, the sole high school of the period we are dealing with; his second term saw the adoption of some of the new educational methods that were coming into vogue in the more progressive cities of the nation.

Perhaps the most important innovation of this period was the kindergarten. In 1887 an experimental one was begun at No. 20. Fifty children attended the class which was only made possible by the sponsorship of Mechanics Institute. Six additional kindergartens were opened the following year. Many citizens objected to the new idea as new-fangled foolishness; others thought that the lack of discipline in the kindergarten made the transition to "regular" classes too difficult. By various methods, however, the city managed to keep the groups going, and by 1903 when the state authorities were converted to the movement, there were nine such classes in Rochester.

But the content as well as the length of the school course was in process of change during these years. In 1886 a course in industrial drawing was begun under the supervision of Professor Colby of Mechanics Institute, another instance of the valuable cooperation of this institution with the public schools. Courses in cooking and sewing were introduced under the same sponsorship. In 1890 music was made a part of the curriculum.

In the meantime there were important developments outside the public school sphere. Under the vigorous leadership of Bishop McQuaid, the parochial schools of the city were reorganized and extended; the Sisters of St. Joseph played an important role in this development

and extension. Many new buildings were erected, and curriculum changes similar to those in the public schools took place.

Important, too, was the growth of Mechanics Institute. The roots of this cherished institution go far back into Rochester history, but the present day school owed its existence to the generosity of Captain Henry Lomb who in 1885 had made possible four day and three evening classes. In succeeding years mechanical, commercial and home economics classes were added as the need was felt. The usefulness of the Institute to the city was extensive and widely recognized.

Out on University Avenue the University of Rochester was just at the end of one epoch and the beginning of another. Dr. Anderson had laid down his charge in 1888; next year had come David Jayne Hill. Dr. Hill's presidency was to be relatively brief, but it was in several aspects distinctly constructive. The institution was freed from denominational dependence; the temper of instruction in the sciences was in some measure altered; the curriculum was extended. While the great period for the University had not yet come, there were none the less signs of vigorous life, and activity. If Rochester was not yet, in any sense, a great educational center, it was beginning to arouse itself to that desire for distinction which characterizes it today.

Cultural and Social Life

Closely connected with the subject of education is the development of aesthetic and literary interests. There can be little doubt that, viewed either from the point of view of popular appreciation or from the point of view of distinction of output, the United States of 1890 was far behind the leading European nations, and probably behind its own standard of either 1840 or of 1940. But the desire to develop these interests undoubtedly existed, and the city of fifty years ago, in more than one way, gave evidence of that fact.

There was, for example, the Powers Gallery, the center of Rochester's artistic life. The gallery had at first consisted of four rooms filled with pictures and objects d'art picked up by Daniel W. Powers on a trip abroad in 1875. By 1884 a contemporary described it as containing thirty rooms "including the Grand Salon, 30 by 90 feet, be-

sides the rotunda and the halls, and in the judgment of competent persons it has few if any equals in the private galleries of the world."*

It is unfortunate that this collection of paintings, so exuberantly praised by local patriots, was sold on Mr. Power's death in 1897. It is difficult to evaluate it with any degree of precision today. Certainly one of its strongest points was in the large number of paintings of the then modern French school, among them Corot, Delacroix, Rosa Bonheur, and Millet. It is doubtful if it contained any distinguished pictures of the brilliant period of the Renaissance. It is doubtful, too, if, fifty years ago, the popular taste was such as to appreciate the best work that was to be seen. But none the less it is highly interesting that such a gallery existed, and highly interesting that Rochesterians took such pride in it.

The attraction of the Powers Gallery, however, was not wholly in its paintings. Hundreds of stuffed birds were to be seen in a place of honor on the sixth floor. In another room, conveniently located under gas-light, were twelve tables each bearing four boxes containing stereoscopic views. The spectator seated himself before a box, turned the wheel-work by means of knobs at the sides, and gazed with awe upon the realistic scenes from opera and ballet, the views of foreign landscapes, and the interiors of world-famous buildings. If this proved wearisome, he might listen to the "orchestration", which was, as one contemporary described it, "an Automaton of music; it never fails nor grows weary, never misses nor mistakes, never tires nor disappoints!*" And to conclude the day, the visitor might climb to the top of the observation tower and admire a view which extended over the roofs of the city to the blue shores of Lake Ontario.

The Powers Gallery was only one expression of Rochester's interest in art. The Rochester Art Club, founded in 1877, was leading a most vigorous life by 1890, with frequent meetings and a regular annual exhibition. Classes in free-hand drawing were instituted at Mechanics Institute in 1885, and grew rapidly. Such activities no doubt

**Notes on the Powers Building and Art Gallery of Rochester, N. Y.* (New York, 1884), p. 2.

***A Catalogue of the Paintings in the Art Gallery of D. W. Powers* (Rochester, 1881).

appear modest enough, but they were evidences of serious ambition, none the less.

In the field of music, the influence of Rochester's German population was clearly evident. The Maennerchor, a German singing society founded in 1854, and still in existence, was very active in this period, giving concerts and operas, the proceeds of which were frequently turned over to charity. But the Maennerchor did not stand alone. A number of organizations for the production or encouragement of music were formed during the eighties and nineties, the Apollo Club, the Mendelssohn Society, the Rochester Oratorio Society, the Philharmonic Society. Many of these had a short life, it is true, but such was not the case with the Rochester Opera Club, which had its origin in a temporary company formed to put on a performance of *Pinafore* in 1879. Reorganized on a permanent basis, it had many a successful season, and was kept going until nearly the turn of the century.

Rochester had also its men and women of letters. There was Rossiter Johnson, for example, who no longer lived in the city, but who thought so much of it that he became one of the founders and the first President of the Society of the Genesee. There was Helen Kendrick, daughter of Professor Kendrick of the University, whose work, *Woman and the Republic*, was widely quoted by the opponents of woman suffrage. There was Jane Marsh Parker, author of a sprightly history of Rochester itself. There was Mrs. Isabella MacDonald Alden, who wrote under the pseudonym of "Pansy", and specialized in the saccharine. There was Frank Patchin, author of a large number of books for boys; and just outside, at Brockport, and a familiar figure in Rochester literary circles, was Mary Jane Holmes, author of a prodigious number of best sellers. The list is not impressive, so far as the greatest literature is concerned, of course; but it testifies to a very considerable activity and productivity, none the less.

There were other signs of cultural activity in 1890 that ought not to be neglected. There was, for example, the Rochester Historical Society, first founded in 1861, but revived by Mrs. Gilman Perkins in 1888. There was the Academy of Science, reorganized in 1889, and into which that venerable and useful citizen, Herman LeRoy Fairchild, was breathing a new life. There were the various discus-

sion clubs, the Pundit, which went back to 1854, the Fortnightly, the Roundabout and many others. Such organizations often brought together Rochester's leading citizens; they played their part in the widening interests of the city in the world at large.

In the Rochester of 1890 there were also many pleasant expressions of social life. There existed, it is true, a kind of rivalry between the East and West side. The old Third Ward was still the home of many of Rochester's distinguished citizens, and still reflected a friendly village atmosphere well described by Charles Mulford Robinson in his gossiping recollections. But East Avenue had been built up to a substantial degree; and there was often a gentle note of superiority in the comment of the dwellers in one section upon the other. Robinson tells us that this competitive temper sometimes extended beyond the social sphere into an attempt of each side of the city to outdo the other. The East side, for example, had its "Seven Corners" rivalling the famous "Four Corners", and when the former was adorned by a temporary triumphal arch in honor of the returning Spanish war hero, General Otis, the latter evened things up by procuring for itself the reviewing stand. There were public markets on Front Street and at the Seven Corners; the big new stores were on the east, the financial center on the west; the University was established on the East side, but the West had Mechanics Institute to rival it. Tickets for concerts and theatrical performances must be put on sale on both sides of the city, and thus Third Warders and East Siders might each occupy a special part of the house in a way which underlined the separation.

But we must not think, of course, that this separation went very deep, or was the subject of any real bitterness. Rochesterians worked together in many social activities, such, for example, as the donation, a sort of bazaar or fair, organized for charitable purposes, and a regular institution throughout the period. The Twigs, a prominent feature of Rochester social life today, had come into being in the eighties, and were flourishing before the decade reached its close. Rochester's clubs were growing in importance. The Genesee Valley Club and the Rochester Club owned their own buildings, and numbered 250 to 300 members.

There were plenty of amusements for the Rochesterians of 1890, and one gets an excellent idea of them from the "social column"

which the *Post Express* began to publish in the late eighties. In 1890 there appears to have been a rage for amateur theatricals and charades, for the always popular costume balls, and for "Cheap and Hungry Parties," whatever the latter may be. The column for that year repeatedly records "Barn Parties", and makes notice, too, of a "pink tea", which was given in Mrs. Granger-Hollister's barn.

The dinner parties of the period were often very elaborate affairs, and apparently many of them were masterpieces of over-decoration. Even some of the contemporary critics expressed their disapproval of the prevalent practise of tying pink ribbons on everything from lamb chops to chocolate eclairs. In connection with such affairs, the prince of caterers was Isaac Teall who for years arranged the wedding breakfasts and trimmed the birthday cakes for many Rochester families. It was Mr. Teall who in 1885 placed the 101 candles on Mrs. Abelard Reynold's last birthday cake.

In the earlier days of the city's history New Year's Day had been the peak of the social season, far overshadowing Christmas, the enjoyment of which until the middle of the century was somewhat dimmed by Puritan prejudice. By the eighties and the nineties, however, Christmas Day had reached its present popularity and all sorts of entertainments, many of them quasi-charitable in nature, added to the festivity of the season. The result may have been a falling-off in New Year's gaiety. At any rate the author of the society column commented sadly in 1890, "New Year's Day was such a dismal failure as to make one long for the festivities it used to bring when the sleighs dashed gaily from house to house bearing loads of jolly callers . . . when the tables were loaded with good things . . . when the men forgot to be bored and the ladies to be formal and everyone was happy. The only hospitable tables on the first day of 1890 were at the clubs."

This was a melancholy picture, but it certainly gave a false impression of Rochester winter gaiety. In this far-away past East Avenue resounded every winter to the jingle of sleigh-bells, and to the crack of whips as gaily decorated equipages dashed gaily up and down under the snow-laden elms. There one might see Granger Hollister's vis-a-vis sleigh with its fox-tail plumes and silver mountings, drawn by a pair

of sorrels, or Wilson Soule's landau-sleigh, with yellow and green plumes and drawn by a pair of greys, or Frank Elwood's handsome vis-a-vis, ornamented with green and black plumes and silver trimmings with its silver screen designed to catch the snow thrown up by the hoofs of the horses. On special occasions the street was turned into a real race track from Culver Road to Alexander Street with two long ridges of snow dividing the roadway into three parts. The two outer ones were reserved for the carriages of on-lookers while up and down the middle one the young bloods of the community raced their favorite mounts.

Another favorite winter sport, and one with a wider appeal, was skating. At the old Aqueduct, on fine winter days, hundreds of skaters congregated, protected from the cold winds by the grey walls of the old structure, and sure to meet some of their friends out for an exhilarating hour or two of exercise.

In summer there was boating on the river, both on the lower stretches and near Genesee Valley Park, where there were already some boat-houses. A number of boat and canoe clubs were in existence; in 1892 the double shell race for the championship of America was held at Ontario Beach Park. There was also horse-racing. Every August large numbers flocked to the Rochester Driving Park for the exciting circuit races. The eighties had been the hey-day of this sport, and here in 1881 Maude S., owned by William H. Vanderbilt, had set the world's record for the mile at 2.10 $\frac{1}{4}$. But the races continued into the early nineties. The eclipse which they were to suffer may have been due in part to the rise of baseball, and to the formation of the International League with Rochester as a member in 1889.

There were other simpler forms of amusements as well. Golf was still a rich man's game, and only coming in at the centers of fashion. Tennis was a long way from popularity. But croquet had a strong appeal, and cycling one of the favorite forms of diversion. The last decade of the nineteenth century, indeed, is the period of the bicycle, par excellence. Conservative persons complained that the dashing riders frightened the horses, and made necessary more policemen, but what could this avail against the lure of the fastest form of locomotion that had yet tempted the individual American?

Finally, Rochesterians of 1890, if they did not have the movies, had the theater, or rather several theaters, the Lyceum, then new, the Academy, on Exchange Place, the Grand Opera House on South Avenue, the New Opera House on South Clinton. It was at the Lyceum that Edwin Booth suffered a paralytic stroke during a performance of *Hamlet* in 1891. There, too, came Joe Jefferson in his immortal role of Rip Van Winkle, and Robert Mantell in Shakespeare and in Bulwer-Lytton's *Richelieu*. There was William Gillette in "Sherlock Holmes" and such sentimental masterpieces as "Sweet Lavender", advertised in 1889 as a "pure wholesome drama."

Speaking generally, indeed, Rochesterians had at least as many outlets for their spirits in 1890 as they do today; and in some respects they lived in a more cheerful age. In 1890 the future of this city and this country seemed to present nothing but hope; the whole world, indeed, seemed to be marching on towards a happier society. There was a challenge to new achievement; there was a faith in new accomplishment. If we, in our own time, can feel that same spirit of challenge, if we can revivify our faith, we shall be the worthy successors of the Rochesterians of fifty years ago.

